THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (CAPT. JAI NARAYAN PRASAD NISHAD) : (a) It is not correct to say that protection of old trees and rare plants have been neglected at Sibpur Botanical Garden, Howrah, West Bengal, due to mismanagement of Botanical Survey of India.

(b) There are vacancies of scientists from varying period, these are in the process of being filled up. No complaint of any internal clique working against the joining of new people is there.

(c) to (e). A communication dated 30.10.96 from the Secretary General, Confederation of Central Government Employees and Workers (CCGE&W), Delhi was received by the Secretary to the Government of India, Ministry of Environment and Forests (GOI, MOEF). The Secretary MOEF, GOI met the representatives of Botanical Survey of India Employees Association on 13.11.1996. Various issues concerning the employees of the BSI were discussed in this meeting and the representatives were informed of the steps being taken by the Ministry to resolve these issues.

The important issues on which progress of action was noted in this meeting were as follows :

(1) Implementation of Biswas Committee Report regarding relaxation of the requirement of M.Sc. qualifications for appointment by promotion as Scientist 'B', in favour of Scientists in the feeder grade who possess B.Sc. qualifications.

(2) Direct recruitment to current vacancies of posts of Scientists and upgradation of some posts of Stenographers after seeking and obtaining relaxations of the instructions which prohibit such direct recruitment/upgradation when work measurement study is in progress in the BSI. The need to complete the work measurement study urgently was also emphasised.

(3) Restructuring of the posts of Drivers, and consideration of awards of higher scales of pay to Fieldman and Dresser.

(4) Filling up of 2 posts of Administrative Officers.

[Translation]

Pearl Production in Madhya Pradesh

3652. SHRI DADA BABURAO PARANJPE : Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state :

(a) whether pearls can be derived from Leg, Lodence marginalis oysters found abundantly in the Narmada river;

(b) whether the Government propose to formulate any action plan for the production of cultured pearls in the future; and

(c) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE (EXCLUDING THE DEPARTMENT OF ANIMAL HUSBANDRY AND DAIRYING (SHRI CHATURANAN MISHRA) : (a) The Central Institute of Freshwater Aquaculture (CIFA) Bhubaneswar has evolved an indigenous method of culturing pearls in the common freshwater mussel, Lamellidens marginalis.

(b) and (c). The technology is still at an experimental stage.

Wage Revision Agreement

3653. SHRI ASHOK PRADHAN :
SHRI GANGA RAM KOLI :

Will the Minister of FOOD be pleased to state :

(a) whether the wage revision agreement of sixty thousand employees of the Food Corporation of India w.e.f. February 1, 1992 is under consideration of the Ministry;

(b) the reasons for inordinate delay in clearance of the same as a result of which employees will have to suffer economic losses; and

(c) the time by which the said agreement would be accorded clearance?

THE MINISTER OF FOOD AND MINISTER OF CIVIL SUPPLIES, CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI DEVENDRA PRASAD YADAV) : (a) The proposal of wage revision was received from Food Corporation of India in July, 1996. Such proposals are to be examined in the Ministries of Food, Finance and the Department of Public Enterprises.

(b) and (c). There has been no inordinate delay in clearance as such matters are complicated and require inter-ministerial consultation. Though the matter is accorded high priority at various levels, no specific date can be committed for according clearance.

[English]

Self-Employment Scheme for OBCs

3654. SHRI BHAKTA CHARAN DAS : Will the Minister of WELFARE be pleased to state :

(a) whether Government propose to launch a new self-employment scheme for the jobless youths belonging to Other Backward Classes during the current financial year;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the criteria proposed to be fixed to provide loans and subsidy to them?

THE MINISTER OF WELFARE (SHRI BALWANT SINGH RAMOOWALIA) : (a) No, Sir. However, the measures undertaken by the NBCFDC over the year to improve the quality of planning and implementation of

loan schemes leading to self employment are expected to have positive impact upon its beneficiaries of whom approximately 10-15% fall in the age group.

(b) and (c). Question does not arise.

[Translation]

Sabotage of Railway Tracks

3655. SHRI PANKAJ CHOWDHARY :
KUMARI UMABHARATI :
SHRI SATYA DEO SINGH :

Will the Minister of HOME AFFAIRS be pleased to state :

(a) whether there has been a significant increase in the incidents of sabotage of railway tracks in the country;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor;

(c) the States where most of the incidents of sabotage of rail tracks have taken place;

(d) the loss suffered by the country as a result thereof; and

(e) the steps taken by the Government to prevent these incidents in future?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS (SHRI MOHD. MAQBOOL DAR) : (a) to (e) the registration, investigation, detection and prevention of crime relating to Railways is the responsibility of the Government Railway Police (GRP) which functions under the control of respective State Governments/UT Administrations. Information under the Crime Head 'Sabotage of Railway Tracks' is not maintained at the Central level.

[English]

Financial Powers to States

3656. DR. T. SUBBARAMI REDDY : Will the Minister of HOME AFFAIRS be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Union Government have set up a permanent Committee under the Inter-State Council to examine the proposals for devolution of more financial powers to States;

(b) if so, whether any Standing Committee has been appointed to report to the Government in this regard within shortest period of time; and

(c) if so, the main points referred to the Committee and the time by which the Committee is likely to submit its report?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS (SHRI MOHD. MAQBOOL DAR) : (a) to (c). In its second meeting held on 15.10.1996, the Inter-State Council recommended that there should be Standing Committee of the Council for continuous consultations and processing of matters for the considerations of the Council. The said Committee has since been constituted. This Committee will :

(i) have continuous consultations and process matters for considerations of the Council.

(ii) review and update the recommendations of the Sarkaria Commission especially the vital questions of devolution of financial powers from the Central Government to the State Governments;

(iii) examine the changes required in article 356 of the Constitution;

(iv) consider the current views of the State Governments on 179 recommendations on which there was a consensus in the Sub-Committee and also the 12 items on which there was no consensus;

(v) process all matters pertaining to Centre-State relations before they are taken up for consideration in the Inter-State Council.

(vi) monitor the implementation of decisions taken on the recommendations of the Council; and

(vii) consider any other matter referred to it by the Chairman/Council.

The Standing Committee will submit its report on items (ii) and (iii) above within three months.

[Translation]

Home Guards

3657. SHRI SANTOSH KUMAR GANGWAR : Will the Minister of HOME AFFAIRS be pleased to state :

(a) whether the security of the office of the Chief Controller (Pension) which was with the Home Guards under his Ministry has now suddenly been withdrawn and entrusted to a Private Company;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor and the annual expenditure being incurred on the new arrangement;

(c) whether it has been reported that this had been done with the connivance of the officers of the said office; and

(d) if so, the measures being taken by the Ministry to restore the same with the Ministry?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS (SHRI MOHD. MAQBOOL DAR) : (a) and (b). The services of the Home Guards have been withdrawn from 31.10.1996. The Central Pension Accounting Office has now entrusted the security of the office to a private security agency which is also providing security cover to the Passport Office under the Ministry of External Affairs and is approved by the Security Bureau of that Ministry. This arrangement has been